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Annual reports of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, years ending August 31, 1875 and 1876

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No.
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY,
STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA.
From W. H. H. Beadle

Dakota. Rept of Supt of Public Instruction

ANNUAL REPORT

—OF—

W. H. H. BEADLE,

Territorial Superintendent of Public Instruction.

TERRITORY OF DAKOTA,
Office Supt. Public Instruction,
Yankton, Dec. 15, 1882.

His Excellency,
N. G. ORDWAY,
Governor of Dakota Territory.

SIR:—

In compliance with law, I have the honor to submit the following report of the schools and school revenues and expenditures of the Territory of Dakota, for the year ending March 31st, 1882.

Very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
Wm. H. H. BEADLE,
Ter. Supt. of Pub. Instruction.

The law does not provide for printing these reports, and whatever they may contain lies unread in the original manuscript. In order to print this at my own expense, it is reduced in scope and to a mere summary of a few facts and recommendations.

The table of statistics presented is very incomplete. There are forty-nine organized counties in Dakota, from forty-six of which reports were due for the school year herein embraced. Of these but thirty-three have made any report whatever, eight of which are very defective, and nearly all are accompanied by letters showing that they are not full and accurate. Several of the older or larger counties, like Pembina, Clay, Burleigh, Grand Forks, Brown, Beadle and Hamlin, and as many newer counties, fail to report. The financial statements are particularly deficient, because the local officers neglect their accounts and reports, and largely because the law is very imperfect and inharmonious in respect to these matters. Most districts have not included the proceeds of bonds sold for building and furnishing school houses in their receipts and expenditures; others have included them partly in one and not in the other. The two mill general tax produced at least $62,000 in the general school funds of the counties. Hardly $40,000 of this appears in the reports. By this it seems that less than two-thirds of the school revenues appear in the reports, since this fund is usually more accurately accounted than any other.

The total receipts reported are $327,478 and the total expenditures are $308,978 A full report would have made each over $500,000.

Total school districts organized	1,225
Total graded schools	40
Total ungraded schools	965
Number of school houses	799
Value of same	$525,877

=1882

Amount paid county superintendents....	$ 8,616
Average wages paid teachers, male.....	$ 33
Average wages paid teachers, female....	$ 26
Total expenses of the office of superintendent of public instruction for salary, mileage, office, printing, books, stationary and postage.....	$ 950

The statistics are too deficient for valuable analysis. It may be stated within and not beyond the most reasonable probability, that the territory has at this time 1,800 organized school districts, and 1,700 schools; that its school houses number at least 1,300, worth a million dollars; that it raises by taxation mainly and partly by bonds, and expends for school purposes not less than $700,000 during the current year, and has to provide for the education of 50,000 children.

These general statements are made to show that our system of public education, if not heretofore, must be now and hereafter, of the most vital public importance. Our laws in this behalf are now, at least, deserving of the most careful examination and revision. The system upon which they are based should be scrutinized severely and others examined. The best should be now adopted that it may grow and develop in all our country, newly settled or older, in harmony with all our permanent institutions and government methods, and they with it. To worthily secure statehood let the institutions of a state be deservedly and equally promoted.

DEFECTS IN OUR SYSTEM.

The policy in our school legislation appears to have been this: To leave the old incomplete law without much improvement, and, as rapidly as cities, towns and villages demand better schools, to pass a special law for each. These special and local laws are already numerous. They are excellent and in the main have produced good results. But they isolate each school. They have no relations to each other or to any general system. They are expressly relieved from the duty of making reports. The experience of one does not aid the others. A large additional number of villages will apply for similar acts by the next legislature. There is no good reason for refusing them. But every such board of education can be provided for in one act, by a single general law. This can be done with entire protection to property interests and bonded debts and other special features authorized by the local laws. If but a single law is enacted it will be more carefully considered. The choice is between combined and extreme isolation and localization and the true policy of a uniform general system.

The great evil of the district system is that it creates such irregular and unequal school districts and fails to fairly meet the requirement of a school system that its burdens and its benefits should be equally distributed. The legislative power is ample, indeed the state will have no larger powers than the territory now has in this respect. The appeal for statehood that we may have a better school system is not well based; and the refusal of public men to now meet the question because they wish to wait for statehood before doing it, is no better. The state will simply control larger funds to aid education; it will have no higher duty and no better warrant for passing the best law that human experience and wisdom can suggest.

The Territory now levies one general school tax and its law alone gives authority to all school corporations. The educational system is a state (territorial) institution. The schools are called "common schools" because in plan they are authorized by the commonwealth for the equal, uniform, common advantage and general public benefit. Legislation should proceed upon that theory, and not subdivide sovereignty among unequal local parts to the wrong of many and the public disadvantage. A higher motive for present wise, comprehensive and sound legislation should be the desire to prepare the institution and system of public schools, in all its parts and relations, so that it shall be able to meet and use the increased responsibilities and aids that come with statehood.

It is not a pleasant thing to testify against any institution of Dakota. Our schools are accomplishing great good. Many of those in cities and villages are not surpassed anywhere in the United States in organization and good work. Hundreds of the school districts are equally successful in their places. The people are devoted to education, and use the means they have as well as the law permits. Besides the public schools, Christian charity and enterprise have opened advanced schools and colleges. There is therefore no lack of support in the sentiments of the whole people, for the best work the legislative assembly may do in enacting a wise and efficient school law.

While this is all true the working of the

present system is not good, and it does not seem possible to make it efficient, just and permanently the best. Space does not permit detailed reports of the working of the law The irregularity and inequality of the districts in boundaries, school population and property are the great evil. Large districts are organized and controlled by a community, or by two or three families in one part. The whole district is taxed for their benefit. Despite the most strenuous efforts by this office this evil continues. The county superintendents of new counties seem unable to withstand the demands on them. Small communities of early settlers secure the organization of districts large is area in order to erect and pay for their school house by taxes upon people who can never share the benefits. An instance among many is in Clark county. The district is eighteen miles square and the district tax is twenty-three mills upon the dollar of valuation, and this will build a school house in one corner of the district, twenty miles from some of the settlers homes. Similar cases upon a smaller scale can be found in Yankton, or nearly any other old county, and very generally in the newer ones.

When once so organized it requires the consent of a majority of the school voters, men and women, to authorize a division. Divisions are made slowly by cutting off part at a time, to suit temporary local convenience, or to give advantage. Thus such unjust taxation is repeated. Finally a shapeless remnant is left as a district and it becomes entitled to tax itself to erect its own school house.

The district school meetings are not of advantage to schools. They are very often scenes of disorder and of wrangles between factions. School houses are located and removed and relocated, as the varying strength of factions permits. A regular meeting votes taxes for schools. A special called meeting annuls the vote. Rich and populous districts have been controlled against schools by the secret combination of those who had no children to educate.

The accounts of the districts are poorly kept or not kept at all in many cases. The records are not much better. No one knows what is actually done with much of our school revenues. It is not alleged that they are wasted or often misappropriated. but proper account is not made of them. This arises in part if not largely from the defects and lack of harmony in the law. Let any one compare sections 18, 28, 44, 46, 49, 52, 69 and 71 and remember that a part of each year's tax becomes delinquent and is collected wtth taxes for subsequent years, when the rates for different funds vary, and judge if accounts and reports can be made complete and accurate. The treasurer reports only to the annual meeting and the reports of the clerk and county superintendent are, not in the same terms or items, whiel the important districts are are excused by law from reporting.

It is proper to say that these defects would not be cured by larger salary to this office. The small salary is not the trouble. Under a proper system and with means provided to pay for blanks, for printing instructions to officers, for employing conductors for institutes and other proper purposes, the duties of this office would be simple and easily performed and the salary would be sufficient. The complaint was never on account of salary, but because the law was so imperfect and no means were provided for promoting the desirable and necessary measures.

The present law throws numerous important and responsible decisions upon this office which are of a judicial nature. This should not continue, but the statute should decide those matters or remove the cause of these conflicts.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. It is respectfully recommended that two new acts, or an act in two general divisions, be passed, the first providing for boards of education in all incorporated cities, towns and villages with powers like those provided by the many local laws, which are identical in general terms; and the second providing for the organization in every county of civil townships of adequate area, which shall be school corporations, under boards of three officers, one member being elected and one retiring yearly, and having similar general powers. The boundaries of these townships should be substantially permanent and all the schools in each should be of equal terms and supported by equal taxes upon all the property of the school township. There should be no districts or subdivisions of the township; but the law should strictly require equal school privileges for all.

In a pamphlet printed a year ago the plan is more fully detailed. This system now has the endorsement of, and is ad.

vocated by, nearly all the best informed practical friends of public education in the country. It ends the troubles arising from the bad district system and gives symmetry, uniformity and efficiency to the public schools and all their affairs. The best time to start such a system is the earliest day that the proper law can be passed.

2. The present school age is between 5 and 21 years. It is believed this period is too great, and that the age at which pupils should be admitted to school should be advanced to eight years. Physiological laws and mental qualities alike commend this change. Few pupils attend school who are beyond 18 years. Where all between 5 and 21 are included in a school census the per cent. of those enrolled in schools must appear small out of the whole number. Those under eight and over eighteen being excluded the whole comparison would be more just, and the schools would include those for whom they would be most useful. The benefits to these would be increased because the time and labors of teachers would not be required by infant classes whose members belong either in the nursery, or the kindergarten if that were available.

3. The changes of text books, and the confusion in the kinds used, are great difficulties. Now each district can adopt and change text books at pleasure. When a change is attempted uniformly in an entire county, it fails usually long before completion. Immigrants from other states bring text books with them, and everything tends toward variety and confusion and nothing toward uniformity. The expense is great upon many familes; and there is a cry for relief. I recommend that some measure be taken that will fix uniformity at least in counties and give some permanence to a change when once made. Most contracts concerning text books are made by those not well informed. If we had a responsible territorial board of education some power over this matter could properly be given to it. Such beard could prevent many of the evils now so common and at the same time secure more favorable terms for books.

4. There is need of a careful revision of the law authorizing the issue of bonds by districts, and the addition of provisions requiring the bonds to be registered in some county office before issue, such registry to be a certificate of their regularity. If such provision were made, and another added requiring the county authorities to levy each year the necessary tax to meet accruing interest and to provide the sinking fund the temptation to irregularity, and danger of failure to meet payments, would be removed, while the rate of interest could be reduced under the better credit. With civil townships as school corporations, and such provisions for protecing credit, the saving would be material and the general reputation advanced.

5. There should be held at least twenty teachers' institutes, of from one to three weeks' duration, each year. These should all be held within a certain limited time each spring and early autumn. The superintendent can do but a small part of this needed work, and an appropriation should be made to enable this office to employ a small corps of trained conductors for institutes.

6. There should be an appropriation to enable this office to print a pamphlet of instructions and advice to school officers

7. Blanks of a uniform kind and in proper form can only be secured by an authority for the territorial superintendent to supply them.

8. The superintendent should have an office and a desk and a few, at least, of the ordinary necessities of such a place. This is required for the public advantage. The present law affords no proper facilities, no books of record, and no office but one's home.

9. The appropriations required for this office are respectfully submitted as follows: For salary, $600; for mileage, $300; for books, stationery and postage, $200; for office rent and furniture, $300; for supplying blanks and forms, with pamphlet of instructions to all school corporations, $1,800. There should also be appropriated a sufficient sum to secure the printing and distribution of not less than 6,000 copies of the school law if a new one be passed. A few pages of instruction added to this might save the necessity of a separate pamphlet and serve a better purpose. If a deputy or assistant superintendent be provided for, which seems advisable, his salary should be three hundred dollars.

The labor of the four years has been great; and the confusion in the law and practice under it has required much to be written and said that was not pleasant. But all that was said or

done, whether kindly or severely, was with an eye single to the good of the schools. Every other calling in life offered better inducements. In this, good repute for success and popular approval, if desired, could not be hoped for. It is a place more sure of every other reward. The bitter opposition of politicians has been felt, while every act of a partisan nature was avoided. A persistent effort at considerable expense has been made to secure the selection of the seventy-two sections of University lands, and though nearly all was twice selected it cannot be yet reported that one acre has been set aside. During all the time a constant struggle has been maintained to prevent and end the trespassing upon and cultivation of the school lands. Public opinion has not been steadfast in that regard, and politicians of both parties have treated the agitation of the question with disfavor. The most meritorious non-partisan public movement ever begun in Dakota, the citizens constitutional association, had the advancment of schools and the protection of school lands and funds for a leading or principal object. The movement met the opposition or critical and depreciating mention of the press of the territory very generally. It finally sat down by the side of that most exclusive of all issues, the prohibition question, which permits no other to occupy the field with it, and it was silenced in its organized capacity. If some party cannot soon be found that is able unequivocally to declare for the protection of the school lands and funds, by the new state the battle will soon be lost. The tres passes increase. Men of wealth and prominence continue them from year to year. When all other questions are upon us at once and those interested in securing these lands are organized and active, the great default will be mad ., and it will then be irretrievable. After generations will regret the lack of good faith here as present generations regret the weakness of their predecessors in other states.

At the same time a more insidious enemy assails the integrity of this great trust. A brigade of Normal schools is disposing its political power and joining with other interests to secure their endowment and support from these school lands, that are by law, and can in right be, applied only to the support of public common schools. No more worthy object can receive government favor and aid than normal schools, but direct taxation is far better and more honest than the use of these school lands for their foundati n. There is just as much right to use the university lands for such a purpose.

If handled with integrity by the new state these lands will produce a fund that will be an everlasting honor to Dakota, that will support the schools of the people and add to the value of every man's property and labor by their great help; but as it now stands, unless congress intervenes, the battle is more than half lost, and the danger rapidly increases. May the trust be saved, and the heritage of our children guarded by the commonwealth.

STATISTICAL TABLES.

We append the following consolidated table, containing the Statistics so far as reported to this office, for the school year ending March 31, 1882. We insert all the organized counties; from Griggs, Hand, Dickey and Douglas reports were not due.

The report from Pembina County was received after the preceding pages were printed, but it is included in the table.

COUNTIES.	No. of Organized Districts.	No. Graded Schools	No. Ungraded Schools.	Average Number Months Taught.	No. of teach'rs empl'd			Av. Compensation per Mo.		No. persons bet. 5 and 21 years of age.			No. Enrolled in Schools.	Av. Cost of Tuition per Month per pupil.	No School Houses.	Value School houses.	Total Sittings in School Houses.	Amount paid County Supt. in Year.	Total School Rec'ts.	Total School Expenditures.
					Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Males	Females	Total								
Aurora	1	...	1	6	1	...	1	$ 30 00	$	55	45	100	14	$	...	$	...	$	$	$
Barnes	50	1	49	4	10	16	26	45 00	30 00	527	574	1101	697	1 50	35	40 000	1750	250	24 500	35 280
Beadle	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Bon Homme	50	2	48	4.5	29	23	52	24 50	20 25	0.5	929	1954	1610	1 16	33	15 200	1350	350	10 815	9 383
Brookings	74	1	54	4	13	57	70	24 00	18 00	961	893	1854	1119	1 10	49	22 127	1705	382	11 524	11 323
Brown	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Brule	6	...	4	3	2	2	4	37 50	35 00	69	64	133	111	2 34	...	...	...	55	425	547
Burleigh	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Cass	83	8	36	3.2	19	25	44	44 00	36 00	1483	1219	2702	2310	2 08	45	84 8 0	1590	174	33 73	33 735
Charles Mix	7	...	3	3	2	1	3	35 00	28 00	65	45	110	33	1 48	4	2 850	76	60	2 362	2 905
Clark	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Clay	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Codington	27	1	26	5.5	3	27	30	48 00	25 00	357	485	842	595	1 20	26	18 600	700	285	3 143	1 950
Custer	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Davison	17	1	4	5	1	7	8	...	...	...	...	497	175	1 61	6	12 682	400	84	3 302	2 349
Day	7	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Dickey	1	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	22	16	38	...	...	...	...	...	32	...	...
Douglas	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Deuel	33	...	18	4.25	4	15	19	32 00	23 00	461	378	839	384	1 82	14	11 745	710	80	4 236	3 861
Grand Forks	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Grant	44	2	29	4.4	9	20	35	25 00	26 00	490	430	920	740	1 28	25	14 053	890	262	18 344	18 343
Griggs	...	..	..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Hamlin	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Hand	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Hanson	17	...	11	4	5	7	12	25 00	23 00	...	...	...	...	...	10	4 600	284	78	...	...
Hughes	4	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

Hutchinson	58	..	45	3..2	34	15	49	$ 23 00	$ 17 00	1152	1033	2185	1029	$1 30	20	$ 7 600	89	$218	$ 6 130	$ 6 130
Kidder																				
Kingsbury	44	..	14	4	5	8	13	25 00	21 00	392	305	695			14	8 500		383		
Lake	53	1	37	4..2	6	33	39	26 00	20 00	602	533	1135	770	1 16	44	15 364	860	218		
Lamoure	4	..								25	15	40						15		
Lawrence	44	3	36	5..25	11	26	37	78 00	48 00	1340	864	2204	1340	2 46	20	34 200	760	696	28 435	26 548
Lincoln	71	1	70	4..9	35	60	95	26 00	25 00	1119	1125	2244	613	1 48	63	28 742	2360	454	28 163	23 711
McCook	29	1	24	3..9	7	15	22	24 00	20 00	404	3 0	704	473	1 64	25	12 104	903			
Miner	9	..	23		1	1	2		32 00	65	40	105						71		
Minnehaha	78	2	74	3.75	29	45	74	26 00	24 00	921	1094	2015	2867	1 24	69	44 200	2630	239	13 117	11 694
Moody	55	1	55	3..19	16	42	58	28 00	24 00	695	634	1329	877	1 62	42	18 900	1218	197	8 948	8 948
Morton																				
Pembina	31	1	18	4..16	6	15	21	40 00	26 00	1016	982	1998	744	2 10	20	6 390		191	16 141	5 505
Pennington	15	1	14	6	2	8	10	75 00	50 00	215	221	436	446	1 65	3	2 500	300	125	3 290	3 290
Ransom	9	...	3	3.65	...	3	3		31 00	93	88	181	79	1 15	3					
Richland	37	...	30	5	3	27	30	40 00	34 00	750	800	15 0	600	2 62	21	14 700	840	5	14 900	12 750
Spink	21	...	9	3..65	2	7	9	33 00	23 00	153	130	283	215	1 70	9	3 505	261	33	3 628	4 449
Stutsman	8	1	7	5.25	2	3	5	8 00	40 00	233	228	461	307	89	5	9 142	410	385	11 594	3 596
Traill	47	...	47	4	18	16	34	38 00	32 00	750	640	1390	1123		33	16 500	1014	423	16 2[illegible]7	19 875
Turner	61	1	59	3.75	7	53	60	24 00	21 00			1748	1314		49	15 000	2000	315	8 836	7 851
Union	65	1	64	4..7	29	44	73	32 00	26 00	1383	1355	2738	1890	1 72	62	19 563		358	21 908	17 169
Walsh	37	...	31	4	5	26	31	40 00	35 00	460	520	980	628		20	18 000	750	365	20 940	20 940
Yankton	58	10	58	4.4	30	40	70	30 00	26 00	2015	1289	3304	2348		50	31 300	1650	532	28 917	22 352
Total																				